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26 Nov 83

*1.1 to the file
per Hallman*

Mr. Robert Showalter
Director,
Indiana State Board of Health
Water Sewage Lab Division
1330 West Michigan St.
P.O. Box 1964
Indianapolis, IN 46206-1964

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Dear Mr. Showalter:

There is a potential water and sewage pollution problem in Shelbyville, Indiana originating at Culpeper Wood Preservers treatment plant. Here is the story.

Culpeper Wood Preservers pressure treats pine wood for construction in a process similar to Wollmanizing. That is, Sodium Dichromate, Copper Sulphate and Arsenic Acid are mixed with water at room temp and then forced by air pressure into each cell of the wood. At Shelbyville, the wood is taken from the pressure tube and placed on a drip pad where it is supposed to dry. This drip pad is the only controlled area on the 14 acre yard. The wood is dead packed. That is, there are no laths between layers to allow for air circulation. This dead packed wood is not kiln dried after treating. It stays wet except for the outer layers for several weeks. However, there is only enough room on the drip pad (controlled area) for storage for about 1 1/2 days. This means that the wet wood is taken from the controlled area while wet with these chemicals, and placed on a gravel yard which is not controlled. This yard water sheds in the direction of Shelbyville. The water goes into the local aquifer from which Shelbyville gets its city water through wells. Arsenic Acid is a known CARC. Sodium Dichromate (Bichromate) is also a CARC and destroys, in the most minute quantities, the bacteria in sewage treatment plants.

I believe a significant but unknown quantity of these chemicals are probably polluting the Shelbyville area, particularly those homes directly in the path of the water shed. It is very noticable during a protracted rain. Green puddles of water form over about seven acres of gravelled yard when the rain contacts the treated lumber. The lumber has the effect of several hundred bails of Chinese Tea, turning all the runoff--several thousand gallons--into a murky green brew.

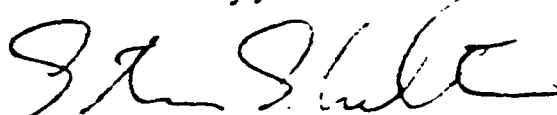
1 I am the former Plant Manager of the Shelbyville Plant. I was terminated on 9 Nov 83. One of the things about my management of the plant which irritated by boss was a repeated reference to this problem, requests for studies and solutions. I was at the Shelbyville plant only 14 months. I had no previous experience with wood preserving prior to that. I was also concerned with direct skin contact necessary for some employees working with these chemicals. This was also irritating to my boss, Mr. Joe Daniel, President and Owner. I believe that he felt that too many expensive modifications would have to be made to the operation to protect the employees and the environment. To protect the environment, he would likely have to build a kiln to dry the wood plus put laths between each layer of wood in their units. Or, he would have to regrade the yard and build a catch pond so that the chemically fouled water would flow into the pond and evaporate.

Once I was fired, I applied to graduate school at I.U. While I was on the campus, I did some research, mostly into OSHA regs for fear of organic damage to some of my former employees. What some helpful professors there showed me was pretty scary. The man most forthcoming on the possible damage to the environment was Dr. Ronald Withnell, Director, Technical Services, Department of Chemistry, Indiana University. He was the one who told me about the Arsenic Acid being carcinogenic and mutagenic, and about the Sodium Bichromates destroying the bacteria in sewage treatment plants.

If I had thought earlier this year that the chemical problem is as deadly serious as it now appears, I would have called. But, I had nothing really to go on until I checked at I.U. It was very dry last summer which would have made a demonstration not possible. It might have cost me my job, but it ended up helping to do me in anyway. Now, it's raining more. When it does rain, you can really see that green water pour off the yard! ~~XXXXXX~~ Now, with Winter coming on, the wood will not dry at all. It will simply freeze and be taken to the uncontrolled, gravel yard thoroughly soaked. There, it will wait for a friendly bit of sunshine to melt the green ice and, releasing the chemicals into the environment, into the ground water.

I think you should look into this. Once again, it is Culpeper Wood Preservers located on Road 100 North (Mauseleum Road) in Shelbyville, Indiana. So far as I know, they are not registered with any agency as users of toxic chemicals or producers of toxic wastes. My phone number is (317) 289-9550. Their Shelbyville number is (317) 398-3125. Thank you for struggling through my typing. It's been a long time since I used a machine. I did have some photographs of this mess, but they were confiscated when I was fired.

Sincerely,



Steven Shelton

cc: Mr. Gwinn Doyle